



Sept. 8, 2025

Dear City Council and Staff,

Menlo Together envisions a city that is integrated and diverse, multigenerational, and environmentally sustainable and environmentally just. **Environmental Justice begins at home, with a safe, stable and sanitary place to live.**

During the Housing Element process, Menlo Together and the Environmental Justice Community advocated that the city adopt a robust set of tenant protections in a timely manner. We are pleased to see some important programs articulated and proposed in the staff report. We encourage you to advance the three short-term priorities with urgency because every day that passes leaves tenants at risk of displacement and eviction, thus losing an essential space of safety and security.

Specifically:

Emergency Housing Assistance and Legal Assistance Programs: These are important and effective interventions that help people stay housed.

For the **Housing Assistance Fund**, is it necessary to wait until July 2026 to fund this already established program? *Please ensure that the existing program remains funded without interruption.*

For the **Legal Assistance Program**: *We urge you to focus and move quickly to establish this program and get it up and running before the proposed November 2026 deadline.* As noted in the staff report, at eviction hearings, 85% of landlords have legal representation compared to 5% of tenants; and when tenants receive legal assistance - from counselling to representation - they have a far greater chance of avoiding an eviction filing and remaining in their home.

Just Cause for Evictions

The staff report proposes implementing a local ordinance that enacts the Just Cause for Evictions provisions of the California Tenant Protection Act of 2019 with the modification that the local ordinance not expire, apply to single family homes and condos, and require landlords to report evictions to the city. *Menlo Together supports this proposal but would like to see additional improvements to:*

- 1) *Increase the amount of relocation assistance from one month rent to 4 months rent* to ensure tenants are able to pay first and last months rent and moving expenses and avoid an episode of homelessness.
- 2) *Begin Just Cause for Eviction provisions on day one of tenancy.* It is true that with a 12 month lease a tenant is protected via the 12 month lease, but some tenants will not sign a 12 month lease for a variety of reasons including lack of awareness of the nuanced connection to Just Cause protections. We should design our policies so that the path of least resistance results in just cause protections from day 1, rather than requiring tenants to make strategic choices based on complex interactions between city ordinances.

*Passing a Just Cause with 4 months relocation assistance that is effective on day one of tenancy should be a city priority with a clear staffing strategy and strict timeline to ensure it is in place well before TPA expires in 2030. **The sooner Just Cause protections are applied to single family homes and condos, the sooner the TPA will apply equitably to the Belle Haven community where most rentals are single family homes.***

There are several other important proposals and in the comments from the Housing Commission that are encouraging and Menlo Together is prepared to support if and when they are selected to advance.

In community,

The team at Menlo Together